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*OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT FUEL CONSUMPTION TEST FIGURES FOR PRINCESS 2000HLS WITH MANUAL GEARBOX (4th FUEL CONSUMPTION): URBAN 22.2 MPG (24.4 L/100KM), CONSTANT 26.1 MPG (22.2 L/100KM), 27.7 MPG (20.8 L/100KM). FOR PRINCESS 1700HLS WITH MANUAL GEARBOX: URBAN 29.7 MPG (24.5 L/100KM), CONSTANT 36.1 MPG (24.4 L/100KM), 47.5 MPG (19.4 L/100KM).

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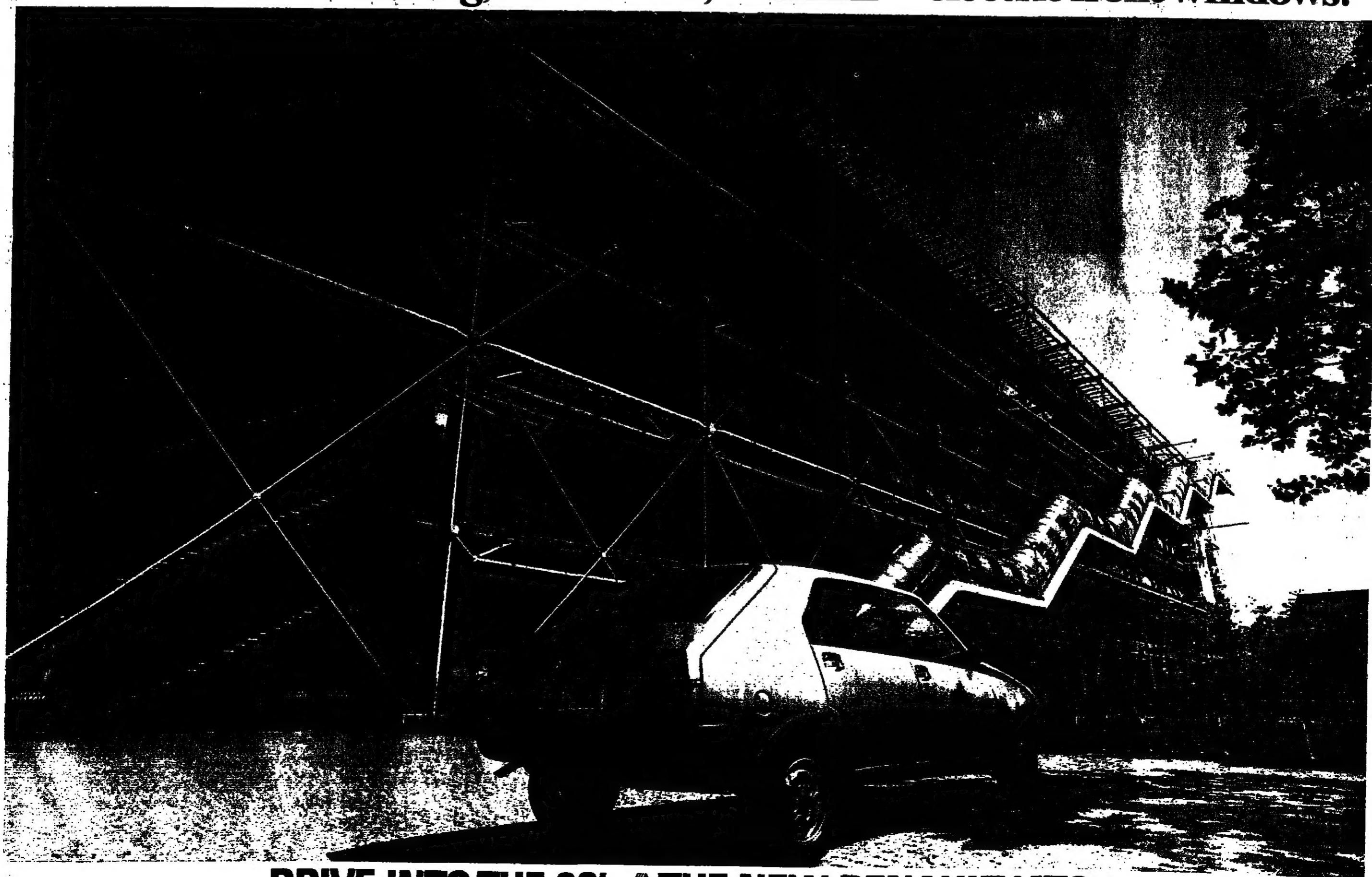
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FINANCIAL TIMES SURVEY

Saturday September 29 1979

Credit Cards

There has been a huge increase in the number of people using credit in the 1970s and the importance of credit cards to consumer spending patterns has become firmly established. The recent proliferation of cards issued by retailers has brought the cashless society closer than could have been imagined a year ago.

Key to Budget spending sprees

By David Churchill
Consumer Affairs Correspondent

THE CASHLESS society has come a good deal closer in 1979 than might have been expected even a year ago. Although payment by credit card is still the exception rather than the rule, the impetus towards change has come this year from retailers anxious to provide their own credit cards for shoppers.

What started as a trickle of interest, with stores such as Marks and Spencer offering credit facilities, has become a flood with almost every major High Street retailer now offering a card available for use solely in their stores.

The speed with which the retail trade has embraced this move has taken many people within the financial and retail sectors by surprise. The main reason for this haste—apart from the general bandwagon effect—has been retailers' fears that the consumer boom conditions of the past 18 months are coming to an end. Providing easy to use credit facilities for regular customers

has the prime attraction of mitigating the effects of any cutback in consumers disposable income.

The importance of credit cards in spending patterns has been shown by the latest figures from AGB Research company's Index. They suggest that in the few days between this year's Budget announcement of higher VAT rates and the implementation of these new rates in the shops, it was the credit card holders who were able to take advantage of the position to buy goods on credit at the lower VAT prices.

AGB says that between June 15 and 17, expenditures by credit card and retail store accounts were more than twice what would be expected if the buying patterns had been normal.

The growth of credit cards in fact is one reason why the pre-Budget spending spree in recent years has assumed record proportions and why retailers can now almost count on a Christmas-like trading period in the month before the Budget.

Yet it was not many years ago that possession of a credit card was regarded as very un-British, with suggestions that it was fairly immoral. Even now, a recent survey by the Office of Fair Trading found that three out of every five people surveyed admitted to being ashamed of using credit facilities.

The OFT survey also revealed that in spite of this embarrassment, there had been a massive increase in the number of people using credit during the 1970s. A survey in 1969 had shown that only 25 per cent of adults were using some type of credit, while by 1977 54 per cent were using credit facilities. The

main reason for the increase, according to the OFT, was the wider use of new forms of credit such as credit cards.

The credit card industry has now developed into three clear sectors, ranging from the banks' credit cards, Barclaycard and Access, through to the travel and entertainment type cards such as American Express and Diners Club, and now the newer form of retailers' credit cards.

Barclaycard, the first of the bank credit cards in the UK, has 4.6m cardholders while Access has just over 4m. However, a sizeable proportion of Barclaycard holders use their card only as a cheque guarantee card.

Guarantee

The object of bank credit cards—Barclay operates Barclaycard while the other three major clearing banks plus the Royal Bank of Scotland group, jointly own Access—is simply to lend people money. The higher the cardholders' debt—provided always that these consumers are regular payers of their interest—then so much the better.

About two-thirds of cardholders are understood not to settle their account in full when the bill is presented each month, with an estimated half of these using a credit card as a form of continuous credit. Estimates suggest that the average balance outstanding at the end of the month is about £160 on active cardholders' accounts, while the average credit limit is between £350 and £400. The average period of repayment is six to seven months.

According to Barclaycard, the typical user of its credit card is youngish, married with a family, owns a home, and has



a mortgage. While the majority of cardholders are male, Barclaycards tend to be used as much for family purchases as personal ones. The Barclaycard holder's wife probably runs her own car and the home is "reasonably well equipped." Barclaycard says that its cardholder "has a moderate amount of disposable income which enables him to afford many of the things he would like to have."

The travel and entertainment cardholder, however, is more typically a businessman travel-

ling abroad frequently and entertaining in top restaurants. Diners Club cards, for example, are described as "a way of life for today's men on the move."

Unlike the banks' credit cards, travel and entertainment cards do not offer continuous credit. These cardholders have to pay an annual subscription to have use of the card. In return, the cardholder can pay bills up to a theoretically unlimited amount but he has to settle in full at the end of each month.

The companies involved make

their money from membership fees and the commissions paid by outlets. They rely for their profits on keeping a comparatively low membership level with high spending per card and a low debt rate.

The newer type of credit cards—those which can be used only in certain retailers' outlets—are the most interesting development in recent years. Since many of the retail credit cards are operated either by Barclaycard or one of the banks in the Access consortium, on behalf of retailers, it is clear

that the banks are not too upset by the loss of potential business to their own credit cards.

In fact, the growth of retailers' credit cards has enabled the bank card companies to make inroads into stores where credit cards were not previously welcome. In addition, the companies have made a big breakthrough in persuading supermarket chains to accept their in-store credit cards for food and drink as well as the more expensive consumer durable items now sold in the larger superstores.

Retailers' credit cards differ from the other systems in that cardholders pay a regular sum each month which entitles them to a certain level of credit. They then pay back as much as they like each month, or else pay the interest charges on the outstanding credit balance.

While credit cards are obviously welcomed by most people as a sensible way of handling their finances, there exists an element of uncertainty over the availability of sensitive credit information and the possibility of being blacklisted on a computerised credit file.

Credit Data, which claims to be Britain's biggest credit services organisation—with more than 10m items of confidential credit information in its files—says that it has been operating at 99.9998 per cent accuracy over the last year. The company says that in handling more than 9m inquiries from the credit trade, it made only 21 mistakes. In the previous year the figure was 24.

Under the Consumer Credit Act, consumers who still feel concerned at the sort of information agencies such as

Credit Data have about them can write and ask if there is a file on them. Inquirers should send 25p to cover costs.

If the agency has a file on the inquirer, under the Act it must send a copy to the person concerned. If there is wrong information in it, the inquirer can insist on the file being corrected or, at the very least, require that the agency puts the objection on file.

Request

If a consumer is refused credit, then he also has a right to know the name and address of any credit reference agency contracted, provided that the request for this information is made in writing within a month.

Credit Data says that 8,534 people applied to see their files during the last 12 months, an increase of 11 per cent on the previous year. Nearly 150 applications were made by solicitors, 31 from advice bureaux, and only one from an M.P.

Most of the applications made to Credit Data were because the inquirer said he had been refused credit. However, only 43 applications resulted in corrections being made to the file and of those, 22 were as a result of receiving wrong information from the courts.

In 2,736 cases—32 per cent—there was no information on file at all. In 841 cases, however, people added a note of explanation to their file for credit companies to take into account when considering their requests for credit facilities.

The Consumer Credit Act also imposed on the credit card companies just over a year ago when the companies volun-

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

The cash crisis of 1950 that started Diners Club International.

In 1950, three American businessmen met for dinner in a downtown New York restaurant. At the end of the meal one of them reached for his wallet and found his pocket empty.

To avoid any recurrence of the situation, Frank McNamara came up with the concept of the charge card.

Initially the 'Diners Club Inc.' had

a mere 200 members and the card was accepted in 2 hotels and 27 New York restaurants. Today it is welcomed in over 150 countries by more establishments than any other charge card, including over 25,000 establishments in the UK.

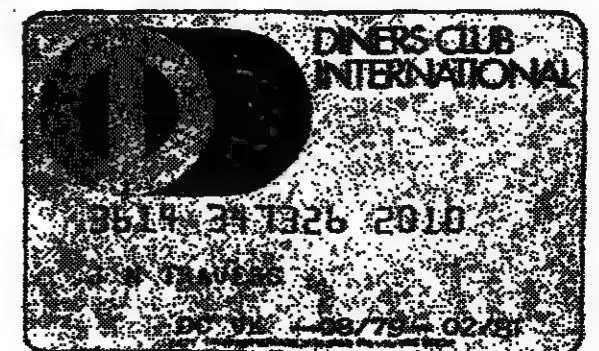
Diners was the first multi-purpose card. The first card to be accepted in the UK, South America, Europe, Asia and

Africa. The first card behind the Iron Curtain. And the first card to offer year-round personal accident insurance.

Today, more and more new members are finding Diners Club is the simplest, most convenient way to pay for travel, entertaining, shopping and all kinds of goods and services worldwide.

And there is no limit on your expenditure. Simply show your card and sign your name.

Diners Club offers you a quick, efficient, first-class service that will help you avoid any cash crises in the future.



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Company (if applicable) _____
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CREDIT CARDS II

Marketing war to win higher income groups

THE international marketing war between American Express and Diners Club for total possession of the commanding heights of the credit card business has taken on a new dimension over the last year or so with a revitalisation of Diners Club. American Express tends to assume that the battle is theoretical rather than actual, thanks to its strong position in important geographical areas, but Diners is determined to prove that there is room for two and that American Express need not necessarily become words synonymous with travel and entertainment.

Segmentation in the credit card business has become more marked over the years. The T & E cards (travel and entertainment), which in spite of the generic name in fact offer little in the way of credit, have themselves encouraged the division. They have eased themselves out of the high frequency, low price end of the business as far as possible—garages and grocery stores—and concentrated more on higher income groups tend-

ing to make more sizeable purchases where the credit card is a more convenient way of carrying funds than anything else. Currency fluctuations, growing awareness of petty crime, increasing world travel, outlet nervousness about credit worthiness and a basic desire on the part of outlets to increase their business—all have contributed to the steady growth of the credit card market internationally. The fact that American Express can invest so heavily on television and direct mail campaigns indicates that even it considers that there is a great deal of growth left in the market.

Campaign

In assessing this potential it would be foolish to assume that annual income, or total wealth, is the only measure of a person's card-carrying potential and thus that the market was easily measurable—say everyone earning more than £6,000 a year. In fact income has a lower priority in member qualifications than

most people think. A stable life-style and a good credit record are rather more significant. A card holder with a lowish income but regular spending habits, perhaps assisted by an expense account, and a habit of paying promptly is vastly preferable to a £20,000 a year man, saddled with mortgage and school fees who makes occasional big purchases and overlooks making his payments.

Contrary to the image cardholders need not to be spendthrifts using the card as a replacement for cash. The Diners Club average number of transactions last year was 15. American Express's expansion in the travel and entertainment card market has been remarkable and impressive over the years. The British advertising campaign may seem a little heavy handed at times, but it is clearly a sign of the confidence of the business over the years. Amex has passed from being a brand leader to being on the brink of exclusivity. Perhaps the fact that Diners Club is not a single company operation has

been of help to Amex. In Britain National Westminster has a 33 per cent holding in Diners and there are similar "associated" deals in many parts of the world. This seems to have led to a patchy performance, with Britain being one of the brighter spots. Changes ranging from a revamped logo to a reorganised central management approach could change all this.

The basic reasons for the growth of the T & E card market, including the nervousness about having the right money at the right time, have also, of course, been the reasons for the concentration of card power on the two companies. The essential aspect of any international credit card is that it should be truly international. Obviously the start-up costs for any card system that attempted to rival the two majors now would be enormous and the potential losses huge.

But the T & E cards do not have to look only to their peers

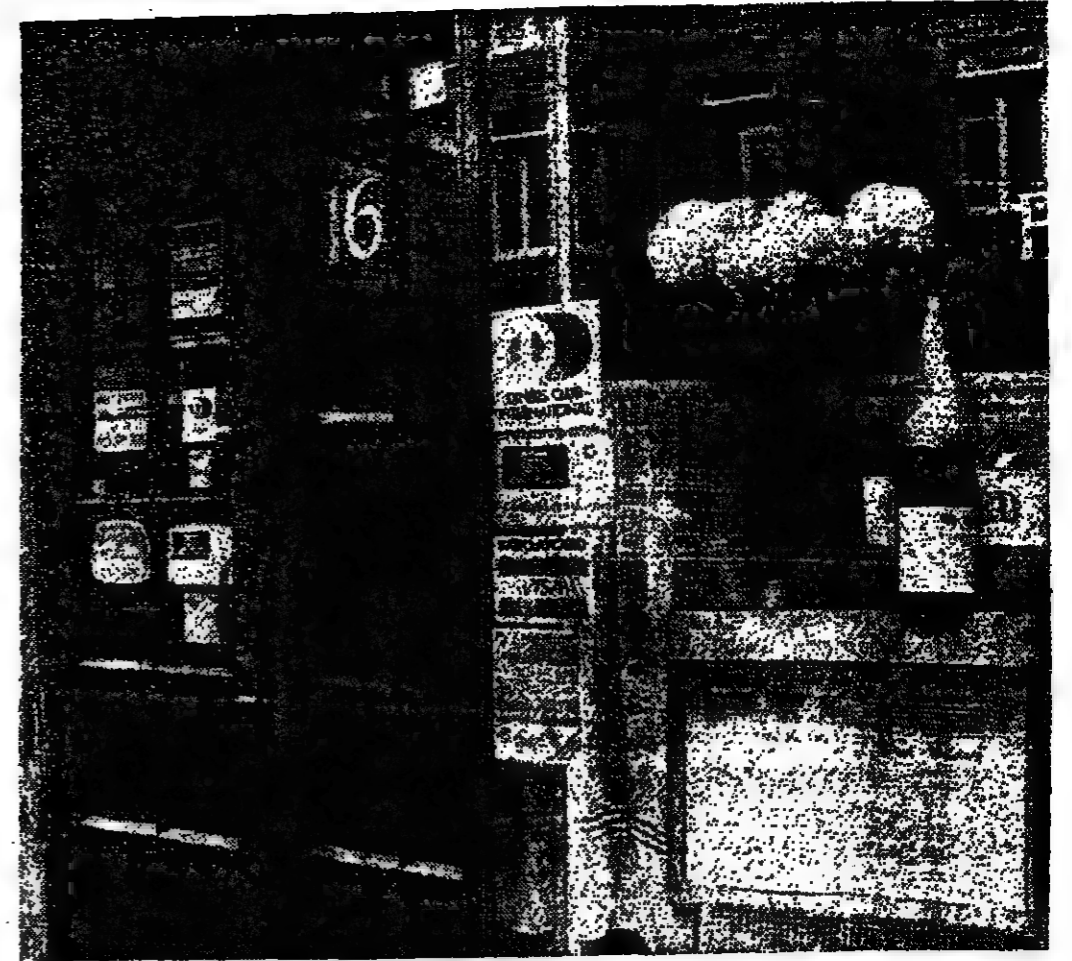
for competition. Just as the consumer cards face rivals in the form of in-house store cards, so the up-market operations see their business being nibbled at the sides by airline cards, hotel group cards and car rental credit operations. Some of these schemes offer discount advantages which cannot be provided by the card companies themselves.

Enthusiastic

A major area for competition is the business house. The card companies are enthusiastic about commercial accounts under which a number of nominated people within an organisation are given cards with their spending underwritten by their employers. For both sides this gives advantages, the card company's administrative work is lessened and its payment more assured. For the company taking on the cards it means a more accurate tally of executive spending can be maintained. The disadvantages are that a bad business debt can be considerably higher than a bad personal debt for the card company, and, for the business house, it means that the sometimes distasteful task of credit control is sometimes landed in the laps of departmental managers when an executive runs a bit wild with his credit card.

Credit control, either in the vetting of potential card holders or in the supervision of the use of cards, is of course a crucial aspect of the T & E card business. In theory, the cards give unlimited credit to the holders, even if in practice telephone calls are made to ensure that someone who normally spends £50 a month is not suddenly buying a £250,000 yacht. At the same time the card companies are tied to fairly narrow margins and are not geared to maintain lengthy time payment accounts.

Opportunities for extensive additional earnings are limited. But the one major asset which the credit card companies



The use of credit cards to pay restaurant bills creates useful business for the highly-competitive card companies

possess, and make profitable use of, is, of course, their mailing lists. Access to a prestige list of guaranteed high spenders with good credit ratings is, naturally enough, invaluable to many manufacturers and retailers. The card companies obviously take advantage of this, but they have to be highly selective. Already the use of credit card lists for mailing shots is sufficiently extensive to provoke some protests by consumers. The shots can be both overt, in the form of straightforward letters, to convert "special offers" that come with magazines and billings.

Although the T & E cards are now so far ahead of potential competition as to be able to feel fairly secure, there are other concerns for them. Economic recession carries with it the prospect of limiting the room for card holder recruitment, and increases the problems of credit control. At the same time international currency upsets can only further make the travelling businessman feel more secure with a piece of plastic, be it green, gold or blue and silver, than with a wad of notes of any currency.

Arthur Sandles

Spending spree

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

partly—though reluctantly—gave in to pressure from the OPT to accept liability for faulty goods bought by customers with credit cards taken out before July 1, 1977. Until this change credit consumers who had become credit card holders after that date received much greater protection under the Act. Apart from restrictions imposed by Parliament—which includes a provision making it illegal to send someone a credit card that has not been asked for—the credit card industry is currently awaiting the publication of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the supply of credit card franchise services. This investigation was begun

in summer 1977 and largely followed the problems caused by petrol stations discriminating against credit card customers. With the petrol shortages in the early summer this year, the problem flared up again with some garages refusing to accept credit cards although obliged to do so under their contract with the credit card companies. Although the Monopolies Commission investigation was started more than two years ago, its report has been delayed several times. The latest date for the Commission to send its report to the Trade Secretary is shortly before Christmas. Publication should follow some time early next year.

Reticence about move to retail store cards

IT MAY seem like only yesterday, but it is now more than 13 years since Barclays Bank took the pioneering step of launching Barclaycard. Britain's first mainline credit card, it has now revolutionised the way in which the bank does business, and it is fully emphasised by the fact that it took the other major banks more than six years to launch the competing Access card.

Today Barclaycard's in issue number 4.6m, of which over 3m are said to be active accounts. New card members are recruited at the rate of 40,000 a month, while average daily transactions by the total membership are said to be of the order of 250,000.

The comparative figures for Access are: cards in issue—just over 4m, of which over 2m are considered active; new card-members are recruited at the rate of 40,000 a month, while average daily transactions by the total membership are put at 800,000. This latter statistic explains the Access claim that it has become the largest credit card operation in the UK; the higher number of Barclaycards in issue is said to be explained by the fact that Barclaycard can and often is used for the purpose of a cheque guarantee card.

Despite the many similarities of the two credit card systems, the organisations which underlie them are fundamentally different. Barclaycard is owned entirely by Barclays Bank, whereas Access is operated through the Joint Credit Card Company by a group of banks which includes Lloyds, Midland, National Westminster and the Royal Bank of Scotland Group.

Cumbersome

With so many interested parties—each in competition with the others—it is hardly surprising that the Access organisation sometimes gives the impression of being somewhat less streamlined than Barclaycard. The structure appears cumbersome because each of the sponsoring bank groups is responsible for recruiting, vetting and supervising its own Access cardholders—even to the extent that a new card member from outside the Access banks has to be allocated either to the Lloyds, Midland, NatWest or Royal Bank groups.

Today, both Barclaycard and Access are interested in the development of cards issued by retail stores. Whereas Barclaycard has already instituted 17

such schemes under the brand name of Barclaycard, Access executives feel restricted in talking about their involvement. For example, Press inquiries over the matter are tacitly referred to individual sponsoring banks. What appears to be happening, however, is that each of the Access card issuing banks is developing its own "in-house" schemes—using the Joint Credit Card Company to provide the procedural back-up as necessary.

Looking back, it seems surprising that one of the major clearers did not anticipate or follow Barclaycard with its credit card. At Midland, in particular, it may well be regretted now that the world-famous Thomas Cook organisation, which became a Midland subsidiary in 1972, was not moved to issue a British alternative to American Express. Perhaps the problems which Midland uncovered when it moved in at Cooks were a factor in the decision not to become involved.

Despite the fact that the two credit card operations are well and truly established, Britain is still far from being the credit card society that the U.S. is often thought of. The current explosion in the use of in-house store cards will partially change

this, but the striking truth is that Britain is still largely an "unbanked" society. In the areas that 50 per cent of employees are still paid weekly and in cash. To this part of the population the credit card is to a great extent unknown. The position could change, however, if ideas currently being canvassed for employees to obtain their wages from on-site dispensing machines, using a plastic card, come to fruition. Such a transformation in traditional attitudes will not be easy to achieve, although the change would obviously have attractions for employers because it would eliminate the need to make up weekly wage packets.

The credit card scene cannot be looked on solely from a UK point of view. Card members increasingly rely upon their cards as a useful means for paying bills while in foreign travel. Both Access and Barclaycard are members of international credit card organisations—Mastercharge and Visa respectively—which seek to facilitate the use of individual member banks' cards on a worldwide basis.

This process of internationalising the credit card is by no means as straightforward as it might seem, as the European row about Visa illustrates. The controversy seems to centre round Germany, and Deutsche Bank in particular. German bankers appear to believe that European banks ought to develop their own payment system, independently of the Americans—whom they regard as dominating the Visa organisation. The German banks have successfully prevented the encroachment of the international credit cards into their territory up to now, and they have convinced a number of bordering countries to take the same line.

Resolved

They seem to be far more interested in developing and preserving the Eurocheque cheque guarantee system. The issue came to a head a few years ago when Deutsche Bank took permission to join the Barclays Bank joining with Visa an organisation which originated from the Bank of America group. There was talk for a time of Barclays having to withdraw from Eurocheque, but the issue was resolved to some extent at least when Barclays agreed to issue its customers with a separate Eurocheque guarantee card for use outside the UK. The number of these latter cards issued is very small—only 70,000—apparently justifying the Barclays decision to place more emphasis on Visa than Eurocheque. Curiously, when a similar problem arose with the French banks and their Carte Bleu card the matter was resolved by having a card with two sides—one bearing the Visa design and the other the Eurocheque design.

Returning to the British scene, it is far from clear how profitable either Barclaycard or Access are. There are obvious problems in profit calculation in the case of both card systems, but suffice it to say that both are regarded as satisfactorily profitable. In Barclaycard's case, 1978 pre-tax profit is said to have comfortably exceeded £10m, on a turnover in excess of £800m, with average outstanding balances of £300m. Access has never revealed its figures, but one source admits that its profits are probably at least as good as those of Barclaycard.

Michael Lafferty



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Windsor Ind. Corp. 30th	01-40-	5.00	5.24	+0.15

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1. *Chlorophyll a* and *Chlorophyll b* were determined by the method of Arar and Collins (1971) using a Shimadzu 1601 UV-Visible Spectrophotometer. The concentration of chlorophyll was expressed in $\mu\text{g mL}^{-1}$.



Planning and Compensation

Light Frank & Rutley

MINES—Continued

AUSTRALIAN

Stock	Price	% Chg.	Div.	Yld.	P/E
30 Corp.	14	—	—	—	—
30 Corp.	15	+1	—	—	—
30 Corp.	16	—	—	—	—
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